

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

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E.O.11652: N/A
TAGS: IR, SOCI
SUBJ: GOI HOUSING POLICY

1. THE LACK OF ADEQUATE HOUSING IS A KEY CONCERN OF BOTH THE GOI AND THE IRANIAN POPULATION. SCARCELY A DAY PASSES WITHOUT SOME LOCAL PRESS COVERAGE OF THE PROBLEM AND MOST RECENTLY ATTENTION HAS BEEN FOCUSED ON TWO ELEMENTS OF THE GOI'S HOUSING POLICY.

2. THE LANDLORD TENENT BILL WAS FIRST INTRODUCED TO THE MAJLIS IN 1973 BY THE GOI AS A BADLY-NEEDED REFORM OF THE MUCH OLDER TENANCY ACT WHICH TENDS TO FAVOR HEAVILY THE TENANT AND MAKES LANDLORDS VERY CHARY OF RENTING TO CERTAIN TYPES OF PEOPLE. THE BILL WAS THE SUBJECT OF DEBATE OF VARYING INTENSITY EARLY ON, THEN WAS RESURRECTED, DISCUSSED AND DE FACTO TABLED WHILE IT WAS SENT TO THE RESURGENCE PARTY POLITICAL BUREAU. THE POLITICAL BUREAU WAS UNABLE TO SOLVE THE DIFFERENCES, IN EFFECT, BETWEEN THE DEMANDS OF LANDLORDS AND THE PLEAS OF TENANTS. THERE IS SOME SUSPICION THAT THE PRIME MINISTER DELIBERATELY JUGGLED THE BILL BECAUSE HE IS AGAINST LEGAL, OR OPPOSED TO ECONOMIC, REGULATION OF HOUSING. THE BILL WAS FINALLY RETURNED TO THE SENATE FOR DEBATE THIS SPRING, WHERE IT HAS LANGUISHED.

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3. REPORTEDLY GROWING IMPATIENT WITH LACK OF PROGRESS, THE SHAH ON JUNE 28 ISSUED AN IMPERIAL FIRMAN WHICH DIRECTED PRIME MINISTER HOVEYDA TO PREPARE A COMPREHENSIVE HOUSING PROGRAM. THE PROGRAM, WHICH WILL BE SUBMITTED TO THE MAJLIS INCLUDES, INTER ALIA, MORE EXPEDITIOUS COMPLETION OF EXISTING CONSTRUCTION AND HALVING THE TIME (FROM SIX TO THREE MONTHS) WHICH NEW CONSTRUCTION MAY STAND VACANT BEFORE

A MUNICIPALITY MAY ASSUME RESONSIBILITY FOR RENTAL OF THE PROPERTY (WITH RENTAL PROCEEDS GOING TO OWNER OF PROPERTY). INITIAL REACTION LOCALLY TO THE SHAH'S DECREE HAS BEEN A 10-15 PERCENT DROP IN RENTAL PRICES AT THE UPPER END OF THE MARKET (\$1,000 PLUS PER MONTH).

4. COMMENT: HOUSING IS AN EMOTIONAL ISSUE WHICH HAS HIGHLIGHTED BASIC DIFFERENCES BETWEEN PROPERTY "HAVES" AND "HAVE-NOTS". THE SHAH, THROUGH THIS LATEST INITIATIVE, IS ATTEMPTING TO PROD THE BUREAUCRACY TO ACT ON A NEW HOUSING POLICY. IN THIS TYPE OF DOMESTIC ISSUE, HOWEVER, THE SHAH ACTS MORE AS A CATALYST WITH ONLY LIMITED OPPORTUNITY TO IMPOSE A SOLUTION FROM ABOVE. WE SHALL FOLLOW DEVELOPMENTS IN THIS SITUATION CLOSELY, SINCE THE SHAH HAS PUBLICLY COMMITTED HIMSELF TO FINDING A SOLUTION TO THE COUNTRY'S INTRACTABLE HOUSING DILEMMA.
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